

Preface

The epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse that threatens our nation has many economic and social costs, but its cost to families is our greatest national deficit. Increasing numbers of Americans are living on the outskirts of hope and opportunity, with hundreds of thousands of children and adolescents feeling the devastating effects of abuse and neglect, homelessness, violence, and economic erosion. The widespread use of alcohol and other drugs by parents and other family members intensifies these social ills. Families should be on the front line of defense in the nation's war on drugs, but in many cases, alcohol and other drugs have broken through the line. Many children and youth stand unprotected. The child welfare community cannot carry out its mandate to protect children unless there is a dialogue among professionals and caregivers from such disciplines as child welfare, substance abuse prevention and treatment, mental health, juvenile justice, public assistance, and domestic violence. It is through collaboration that effective innovations in policies, programs, and practices evolve.

The Child Welfare League of America is especially grateful for the energy, talent, vision, and commitment of Nancy Young, Sid Gardner, and Kimberley Dennis, the authors of this guidebook. We believe that *Responding to Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Child Welfare: Weaving Together Practice and Policy* will be a valuable resource to guide the important work that must be done to protect children and strengthen families.

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